

**THE HONOURABLE WALLY SCHUMANN
MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

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Update on Marine Infrastructure and Services

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is following through on our mandate commitment to strengthen connections with our public and private sector partners in transportation infrastructure.

Marine transportation is an essential lifeline for residents and businesses in many small communities of the Northwest Territories. Communities on Great Slave Lake, the Mackenzie River, and the Western Arctic coast rely on tugboats and barges for the resupply of essential goods and fuel.

With this in mind, the GNWT continues work to develop, maintain, and improve marine infrastructure and services by exploring ways to: increase economic benefits in this industry; minimize environmental impacts; train northerners; and regularly address needs and gaps in marine infrastructure and services.

We continue to improve our capacity to operate a reliable and professional marine shipping service in a challenging Arctic environment and remain committed to providing the best service possible to all of our customers. To date, Marine Transportation Services is on schedule toward a successful 2019 sailing season. This season's schedule was designed with substantial contingency, to minimize risks and to avoid interruption to service.

We are working with our partners at the Canadian Coast Guard, Canadian Ice Service and others to monitor water levels and ice conditions, and we will adjust the schedule if conditions demand. Marine Transportation Services has added a Customer Service position to answer questions from the public and advise customers of progress and of anticipated dates of arrival in each community.

Mr. Speaker, this sailing season, we anticipate the completion of more than 36 million dollars in commercial marine services and maintenance contracts, and the delivery of 45 million liters of fuel and nearly ten thousand tonnes of cargo.

Five of our tugs are operating on Great Slave Lake, the Mackenzie River, in the Beaufort Sea, the Amundsen Gulf and the Kitikmeot region of Nunavut. Two other vessels have been activated; one repositioning from Churchill to Tuktoyaktuk, the other operating on Great Slave Lake. We expect that 184 employees will be engaged to support 2019 operations at peak season; 97 of them NWT residents, 33 of whom are local Indigenous persons.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that our activities proceed in a way that minimizes environmental impacts. The Department of Infrastructure continues to work with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to carry out Environmental Site Assessments on sites operated by Marine Transportation Services. Assessments will continue at specific locations to determine if there is any risk of contaminants migrating off-site.

We also continue to explore opportunities to partner with other GNWT departments, Indigenous governments and development corporations to provide business opportunities, training, and employment.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of training, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport Canada and the Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium joined forces to establish what has become a thriving Marine Training Centre at the Hay River Marine Terminal, a facility that has now delivered hundreds of courses to NWT students. The expansion of the Marine Training Centre this year includes additional classroom space and course offerings, including a Bridgeway Rating Program, Small Vessel Operator Proficiency, and a Fishing Master's Program.

The Marine Placement Program matches graduates from the Marine Training Centre with jobs and economic opportunities. The 2019 sailing season saw six graduates from the Marine Training Centre take deckhand positions with Marine Transportation Services, including one placement on each operational tug boat, and two positions on the Hay River harbour tug. Graduates from the Marine Training Centre have secured employment with the Canadian Coast Guard, and some will sail on the icebreakers that will visit our coastal waters this season.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to training and employment opportunities, the GNWT recognizes the need to support the marine industry by improving marine infrastructure and services. A great deal of maintenance and repair work has been done, and continues to be done, at the GNWT Hay River cargo terminal and shipyard facilities, but much work remains to improve marine infrastructure and services in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, one of the ways the GNWT will improve our marine services is by upgrading our fleet. Four double-hulled barges are being built for delivery to Tuktoyaktuk in August 2020. An extensive overhaul is being performed on one of our own tugboats, the Jock McNiven. The Canadian Coast Guard vessel Eckaloo will also undergo major maintenance at the shipyard this winter. These initiatives will employ about 30 people throughout the off season.

We also continue to pursue federal funding to support investment in marine assets and infrastructure. The GNWT has applied for funding from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency for a study that would examine the impacts of climate change on marine assets and services in the Beaufort Delta. The study would recommend operational and infrastructure improvements to mitigate risks to community resupply, as well as potential economic, employment, and community development opportunities that could be leveraged.

Mr. Speaker, there is also work that remains to be done in support of marine operations in the NWT that requires the federal government to step up to the plate. Restoring the Hay River Harbour and other vital initiatives such as icebreaking support and remote federal marine resupply sites require action by the federal government, and I will continue to press my federal counterpart on the importance of working with us to find solutions.

Through our federal, community and industry partnerships, the GNWT will continue to strengthen and support the marine infrastructure and services in the Northwest Territories for the benefit of Northerners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.